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ABSTRACT

Democratization of education is defined as equality of opportunity, aptitudes being equal, of access to further education following the compulsory classes common to all young people. The situation in France is analyzed in terms of school enrollment ratios by social class. The situation in France is compared to that in Great Britain, the United States, Germany, and the people's democracies of central and eastern Europe. The report discusses inequality of opportunity according to economic, cultural, and educational reasons and concludes that equalization of education is a question of political choice. (Author/MLF)

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No.31 THE SOCIAL ASPECTS OF EDUCATION IN THE INDUSTRIALISED COUNTRIES

by R. Poignant

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THE SOCIAL ASPECTS OF EDUCATION IN THE INDUSTRIALISED COUNTRIES

by

Raymond Poignant

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Introduction

The absorbing and highly controversial question of the democratisation of education is an immense subject. In this talk I merely wish to contribute a few elements of information and reflection which I hope will enable you to get to closer grips with it.

I shall confine myself to the industrialised countries. In some of the countries of the Third World this problem has in fact not yet arisen in the same terms as in our countries; owing to the recent development of education and the relative absence of structure by social categories, the situation in those countries may seem more democratic. The case of the Ivory Coast affords an illustration: 60 per cent of the Ivory Coast high school students in Abidjan are the children of farmers(1) which indicates that in comparison with the industrialised countries, the children of farmers are in a less unfavourable situation than they are in our countries. There is an explanation for this; secondary education, in full expansion, can only draw on the mass of children who have recently passed through primary school and who come direct from the mass of the agricultural population.

I have dealt in some detail with the comparative social aspects of secondary and higher school attendance in several big industrialised countries in a number of chapters of a work entitled "Education in the Common Market countries", a work which, moreover, extends the comparisons to the United States, the United Kingdom and the USSR. I shall refer to that for the international comparisons while at the same time giving you fuller details of the situation in France.

I. THE DEMOCRATISATION OF FURTHER EDUCATION IN FRANCE AND SOME OTHER INDUSTRIALISED COUNTRIES. THE RECENT TREND

The expression of the 'democratisation' of education can be defined by reference to equality of opportunity, aptitudes being equal, of access to further education following the compulsory classes common to all young people.

Modern constitutions, including in particular the French constitution of 1946, generally include in their preamble a list of the economic and social rights recognized in all citizens and stress the right of children (subject to their aptitude) to 'equality of access' to education, whatever their social origin or place of birth.

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(1) Source: Rémi Clignet and Philip Foster, The Fortunate few, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1966.

What really happens in practice? Has not this right, proclaimed for the past twenty years, remained purely 'formal' and not 'real'? You may say that this is Marxist language, but in fact Condorcet, in his report to the Legislative Assembly in 1792, used virtually the same language when he defined the first goal of the system of national education which he advocated as being "to establish an equality of act among citizens and to give reality to the political equality recognised by law".

A. The situation in France

(a) Analysis of the situation in 1953

We shall try to analyse the situation of education in France from this angle by reference to three Tables which will be presented in succession. Table 1 shows the trend of enrolment ratios in France from 1800 to 1960, broadly distinguishing three major levels of education.

Table 1. General trend of enrolment ratios in France from 1800 to 1960 (by level of education)

	1800	1900	1945	1960
	%	%	%	%
1st degree (6-12 years)	30 to 40	100	100	100
2nd degree (12-18 years)	1.5	3	12	40
3rd degree (18-23 years)	0.6	1.2	4	7

These overall rates show, with the achievement of full primary enrolment shortly before 1900, the slow development of secondary and higher education during the nineteenth century, a faster development between 1900 and 1945 and, above all, the sudden upsurge in secondary and higher education enrolment ratios between 1945 and 1960. This upsurge has since accelerated, forming the French 'school explosion' as Louis Cros calls it.

But these overall rates in fact conceal wide differences in the attitude of the different social groups towards further education. For an analysis of these differences we refer to Table 2 below(1).

(1) Extracts from articles by Alain Girard, published in the review "Population" (I.N.E.D.) No.4 of 1954 and No.1 of 1963.

Table 2. Trend of intake into Class 6 of classical and modern high schools (Lycées classiques et modernes - L.C.M.) and comprehensive school (collèges d'enseignement général - C.E.G.) by social origin from 1953 to 1962(1)

	1953(2)	1963		
	TOTAL	C.E.G.	L.C.M.	TOTAL
Agricultural wage-earners	13 %	21	11	32 %
Working farmers	16 %	24	16	40 %
Operatives	21 %	29	16	45 %
Craftsmen and shopkeepers	39 %	34	32	66 %
Office workers	45 %	34	33	67 %
Middle executives	47 %	29	55	84 %
Industrialists and big businessmen	68 %	27	57	85 %
Liberal professions	87 %	18	75	93 %
Senior executives	86 %	19	75	94 %
Total	30 %			55 %

At the beginning of the period under review, in 1953, it was mainly on entering Class 6 that the child's future was determined; those who stayed in the terminal primary classes had little chance of going on to secondary or higher education; the best they could do was to go to an apprenticeship centre(3) or, in some cases, to Class 4 of the technical high school to study for the certificate of industrial education (brevet d'enseignement industriel) or the certificate of commercial education (brevet d'enseignement commercial). Later on, children in this category had a slight chance of going on to higher education through the long and difficult road of the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers.

(1) Extracts from articles by Alain Girard published in the review Population (I.N.E.D.) No. 4 of 1954 and No. 1 of 1963.

(2) Excluding the Département of the Seine.

(3) Now known as 'collèges d'enseignement technique' (C.E.T.).

Now, at this same date (1953) considerable differences were found in the opportunity of access to Class 6 according to social origin: 13 per cent for the children of agricultural workers, 16 per cent for working farmers, 21 per cent for industrial operatives compared with 68 per cent for industrialists and big businessmen and nearly 90 per cent for the liberal professions and senior executives; to these inequalities, assessed overall, must be added the fact that the children of manual workers went principally to Class 6 of the comprehensive schools and the children of executives to Class 6 of the high schools.

Let us now look, for the same year, at the comparative rates of university entrance as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Trend of enrolments in public faculties for some social categories between 1953-1954 and 1963-1964.

Parents' occupation	Enrolment ratio 1953-54	1963-64	Growth 1953-1963
Farmers	0.90 %	3.3 %	+ 266 %
Agricultural wage-earners	0.26 %	1.2 %	+ 361 %
Industrial operatives	0.29 %	2.0 %	+ 589 %
Craftsmen and shopkeepers	4.10 %	12.1 %	+ 195 %
Average rate	3.70 %	9.7 %	= 162 %

We have been unable in this table to give such a full sample of social status categories, but the data set out are nevertheless very significant.

Whereas in 1953 the rate of access of children of the 'liberal profession - senior executive' type of family must have been between 50 and 60 per cent of the group in question, the enrolment ratios for the children of manual workers were only 0.26 per cent, 0.29 per cent and 0.9 per cent, in other words the difference in opportunity of access was of the order of 1 : 200! We are a long way from the equality of opportunity which the constitution-makers of 1946 spoke about.

(b) The main reasons for this inequality of opportunity

For the convenience of discussion, this state of affairs can be explained by three sets of factors.

(1) Economic reasons: although schooling is free and scholarships are available, further education for the children of low-income families comes up against the obstacle of 'loss of earnings'; for purely financial reasons, families hesitate to commit their children to long studies of which they cannot see the end, and prefer shorter training (of a vocational or technical type) which holds out hopes of a quicker wage.

(2) Cultural reasons : each family has a sort of 'pattern of culture' of its own which quite naturally tends to be handed down to the children.

Manual workers who, in 1953, had, for the most part scarcely gone beyond primary school, limited their ambitions for the general education of their children to what they had known themselves. Conversely, senior executives and professional men who had themselves had a higher education wanted to hand down this type of culture to their descendants; the whole school career of their children was therefore directed along these lines from their earliest childhood.

(3) Educational reasons : consideration of the school results of children from the different social groups shows appreciable differences; on average, the success of children from the 'middle' or 'higher' groups is greater than that of the children of manual workers. These differences obviously result from the educative role of the family itself and partly explain the disparities in opportunity of access referred to above.

We shall revert in the second part of this paper to the considerable objective difficulty of this third factor in any policy for the equalisation of opportunity.

(c) Changes observed in the last ten years - their causes

The affirmation of equality of opportunity of access to higher education contained in post-war constitutions is, of course, merely valid as a statement of principle but it does in fact translate an evolution in the ideas of the mass of the population, whose consequences must inevitably show themselves in the practical attitude of families towards the education of their children.

In France, perhaps more than in any other Western European country, we have witnessed an extraordinary social upheaval in this field and a remarkable development of further education among the children of the masses.

A number of factors have contributed to this evolution:

- the considerable rise in the standard of living recorded in France, as in all Western European countries, between 1950 and 1967 (an increase of at least 70 per cent over 1950) has put families in a better financial position for the further education of their children;

- in parallel with the increase in their material possibilities, and concurrently with them, their desires and ambitions have developed; families in the popular classes are more and more inclined to think that their children have as much right as others to further education and their attitudes are changing accordingly;

- the Langevin-Wallon Report (1947) had a profound repercussion, especially among the teaching body, and popularised a more concrete approach to the democratisation of education;

- finally, this trend originating in the economic, psychological and social evolution, has been encouraged and even stimulated, by government education policy (more scholarships, provision of school transport, provision of increased reception facilities under successive five-year plans, reforms in access to secondary education, etc.).

The results of all these factors are clearly visible on a comparison of the attendance rates by social categories in Class 6 and the public faculties in 1953 and in 1962 or 1963 (Tables 2 and 3).

With regard to the children of manual workers (agricultural wage-earners, farmers, industrial operatives, etc.) it is found that the rate of intake into Class 6 more than doubled between 1953 and 1962; furthermore, over the same period, the behaviour of the children of 'middle executives', at this level of education, has practically followed the pattern of that of senior executives (47 per cent in 1953, 84 per cent in 1962).

Thus, in all social groups, except senior executives, who long ago reached a sort of maximum, enrolment ratios have risen very substantially. This is the explanation of the 'school explosion'. The 'population bulge' to which the increase in secondary and higher enrolments has wrongly been attributed, in fact played only a very secondary part at these two levels; the growth rate in high school and comprehensive enrolments since 1950 has reached 200 per cent or more of which the 'population bulge' accounts for 40 per cent only(1); all the rest, or in other words, the bulk of it, is explained purely and simply by the massive growth of enrolments in the middle and popular classes.

The change since 1950 in the attitude of these social categories towards access to secondary education is therefore the basic fact.

The repercussions of this change at the higher education level were only just beginning to emerge during the period under consideration, but the change between 1953 and 1963 is already highly significant.

The attitude of senior executives whose children already benefited from higher education in considerable proportions in 1953, almost at the maximum(2), has hardely changed since then. On the other hand, the rise in university enrolment ratios has been very substantial for the other social groups : Table 3 shows growth rates of 195 per cent to 589 per cent for the children of craftsmen and small shopkeepers. An even higher growth should be found for the children of office workers and middle executives.

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(1) Growth rate of the age groups born after 1947 compared with those born before 1940.

(2) A recent study by Jean Fourastié on the children of a class of Ecole Polytechnique and Ecole Centrale Normale students during the 1920's confirms this.

This growth in enrolment ratios in the different social groups is the sole explanation of the doubling in the student population of French universities between 1957 and 1964, even before the 'population bulge' reached the faculties. For example, the increase in the enrolment of children of industrial operatives from 0.30 per cent to 2 per cent was enough by itself to increase the student population by more than 25,000 and the same is true of the children of farmers and farm workers, and even more for those of office workers and middle executives.

To sum up, we can say that in France, since the end of the Second World War, there has been unquestionable progress towards a better 'democratisation' of access to higher education. But this does not mean that equality of opportunity is firmly established. In 1963, the opportunities of access to higher education varied, broadly speaking, from 1.2 or 3 per cent for the children of manual workers to 60 per cent for the children of senior executives. The opportunity gap was therefore excessively wide, ranging from 1 to 60!

B. What is happening in other industrialised countries?

It is interesting to look beyond our frontiers and try to check how the situation in France differs from that of other industrialised countries. Comparisons in this field, however, suffer from the insufficiency and above all from the non-comparability of statistics (occupational classifications differ in different countries).

With considerable reservations, however, some comparisons can be drawn(1):

(a) Great Britain. The opportunity gap seems narrower than in France: 45 per cent for the children of senior executives and 4 per cent for the children of manual workers. This relative equalisation may be explained(2) by the systematic selection effected throughout the whole age group at the age of eleven by the 'eleven plus' examination (a highly selective entrance examination) which may have the effect of making it easier to detect potential abilities among the children of manual workers and, conversely, to eliminate an appreciable proportion of the children of senior executives.

(b) United States. Higher education is infinitely more developed than in France. The average rate of access to this level in France can be estimated at 12 per cent, whereas in the United States, the first year of Junior College has an intake of 30 per cent of an age group. This is the average of the attitude of the different social groups. Senior executives have the same attitude in America as in France and about 60 per cent of their children go on to higher education.

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(1) The greater part of this information is drawn from our work already cited, R. Poignant, Education in the Common Market countries.

(2) The differences with France may also be largely due to the non-comparability of the vocational categories used.

The rate for the children of manual workers is 10 to 12 per cent. This means that the opportunity gap seems to be 1 to 6; there is not equality of opportunity, but in any event the inequalities are much less marked than in France.

(c) In the Federal Republic of Germany access to further education by children of the popular classes is even less than in France. The origin of this lies in a very severe selection (14 per cent of an age group) on entrance about the age of 10 into the gymnasia, the German secondary grammar schools. At this level, the selection is essentially social, that is to say that it is the children of senior executives and even of middle executives who can go on to secondary studies and very few children from the masses.

This essentially social selection on entrance to pre-university secondary school has an inevitable repercussion on the social and occupational origin of German students (in spite of the existence of an 'alternative' means of access by technical secondary education); the opportunity gap is even wider than in France; in other words, the opportunity of acces for the children of manual workers is even less.

(d) In the People's Democracies of Central and Eastern Europe, the democratisation of access to further education has become a sort of fundamental political dogma; 'formal' equality must become 'real' equality.

It is in fact certain that considerable progress has been made in this field since the introduction of socialist regimes, progress which is in any event faster than that recorded in France since the war, remarkable as it is. However, if the 'democratisation' of education is equated with the idea of equal opportunity for further education, it is certain that, even in the people's democracies, this ideal is very far from being achieved. According to the rare studies which are at present published or available, for example, on the USSR, Poland or Hungary, the rate of access to higher education seems to oscillate between 40 to 45 per cent for the children of senior executives and 5 to 6 per cent for the children of manual workers. In the last analysis, therefore, the opportunity gap is even wider than in the United States. The reason for this difference from the United States is that owing to the average rate of access to higher education of 12 to 17 per cent recorded in the European socialist countries (well below the 30 per cent recorded in the United States) and the fact that the attitude of social groups of the 'senior executive' type is very close to that of their Western counterparts (rate of access of the order of 45 per cent) the rate of access by the children of manual workers is inevitably bound to be lower than the American rate.

Nevertheless, as already pointed out, the situation in a country such as Hungary is certainly more democratic than that of France. The gap in the opportunity of access to higher education is barely 1 to 8 compared with 1 to 30

(or 60). The present relative position of Hungary is, after all, all the more remarkable since that country has only energetically set about this policy of democratisation for the last twenty years, and from this point of view, it can be said to have been more successful than the French policy.

Objectively speaking, the efforts made in this direction in France over the last twenty years cannot be denied, and it may well be asked why Hungary has been more successful in giving concrete shape to this tendency towards the equalisation of opportunity.

In fact, if the opportunity gap - though still very wide - has been reduced, it is by means of twofold action on the two extremities. In the first place, the higher education entrance examination - or rather, competition, owing to the limitation of numbers by 'numerus clausus' in all establishments - has the effect of reducing the rate of access by children of senior executives who are not particularly gifted, whereas under a free system such as that of the French universities, Baccalaureate holders of this social origin, whether gifted or not, can go freely and massively, if not to the Grandes Ecoles, at least to the faculties, and, thanks to the intellectual 'backing' of their family, do very well there(1). Furthermore, thanks to the secondary school structure of the socialist countries, the gifted children of the masses are streamed more largely into higher education. These two factors explain the difference from the French situation.

It may be noted that the existence of a 'numerus clausus' for access to higher education in the socialist countries is bound to raise serious problems among families of the 'senior executive' type. As in the Western countries, they tend to transmit their 'pattern of culture' to their children and in practice they cannot do this for those of them who are not very gifted and are shut out from higher education. For my part, in the course of discussing this question in the peoples democracies, I have supported the 'numerus clausus' as a useful transitional measure on the grounds that in the light of the relative economic development of the countries in question, it was wise, from the point of view of rationalising the major economic choices, to proportion, at least temporarily, the rate of training executives to the needs indicated by the probable trend of employment, however difficult it may be to assess. From a democratic point of view, moreover, it is possible that a purely liberal system would end by increasing the inequalities.

In the present economic situation of these countries, the 'numerus clausus' seems to us to be both - though it is difficult to demonstrate the first term - a factor of social justice and a factor of economic effectiveness. This does not, of course mean, that such a practice can necessarily be transposed to a country such as France; when the national product per capita reached $1,900 one can afford the 'luxury' (an apparent luxury in the short term, since in the long term, it is no doubt an excellent investment) of allowing access to higher education to all who ask for it subject both to the verification of aptitudes and a minimum coherence between the guidance of students and the prospects of employment.

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(1) cf. the study by Professor Jean Fourastié already cited.

II. THE OBJECTIVE DIFFICULTIES OF DEMOCRATISING ACCESS TO FURTHER EDUCATION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

A. The main difficulties

We have equated the concept of the democratisation of education with that of equalisation of opportunity, aptitudes being equal. In fact we have seen that even in countries where this objective has been consciously sought and where recent progress has been the most rapid, this equalisation has nowhere been achieved. The reason undoubtedly is that extremely powerful factors prevent the situation from changing radically in one or two, or even more generations. Indeed, in order to succeed it is a rapid transformation of social structures themselves which is necessary, but the experience even of the most progressive countries shows that in a field such as this, the 'time' factor weighs inexorably.

For the moment all we can do is to recognise the force of the three categories of obstacle briefly noted above, economic, social and cultural and economic.

Without minimising the consequences of the economic factor, whose relative importance, however, diminishes with the steady rise in the standard of living in all strata of society, or the need to limit these consequences by all appropriate means, we should like to lay stress today on the second and third which, in the highly evolved industrial countries, seem to us at present the most important.

(a) The obstacle created by the variety of social and cultural environments. It can be said that the democratisation of education (equal opportunity for equal aptitudes) is virtually ensured in France up to the level of entrance into Class 6 where, with 70 per cent of the age group, the vast majority of gifted children obtain access. The same is true, a fortiori, in the socialist countries where all children have access, under compulsory schooling, to a common first secondary cycle.

However, while 45 to 50 per cent of children of French operatives gain access to a classical or modern 6th class, the same proportion is not found at the level of access to higher education. Many of the pupils within that percentage are aiming at something other than the Baccalaureate; formerly at the level of class 4, nowadays after class 3, they go to technical secondary schools and colleges or even direct to work. They may be doing this in response to the economic necessity referred to above, but they are guided even more by a certain form of occupational atavism and the family pattern of culture. No doubt the operative dreams of a situation for his son which he would like to be socially higher than his own, but his choice can lie only within a range of careers with which he is fairly familiar; supervisors, technicians, schoolteachers etc., In other words, the social ambitions of the popular classes are, in general, determined and limited by the social environment which is perceptible or familiar to them. Only children who seem to be really gifted will be exposed to the risk of further education, thanks to the advice of guidance counsellors or with the help of scholarships.

The situation is obviously very different for the 'higher' social classes who aim to 'maintain' all their children in the situation they occupy themselves or for 'middle executives' who, in direct contact with senior executives are ambitious that their children should complete the social climb on which they themselves have only managed one stage.

It is, however, certain that the attitude of the popular social groups can change very fast thanks to modern means of communicating ideas and the action of special educational and vocational guidance services.

(b) The obstacle created by educational action specific to the family circle. This social and cultural determinism is heavily weighted by the specific influence which the family can bring to bear on the development of their children's aptitudes.

One could start by asking whether, after all, inequality of opportunity between social groups might not reflect an inequality in the natural aptitudes of their children.

In speaking of comparative aptitudes as between different social groups it is important to draw a clear distinction between innate factors and acquired factors.

At birth, it is impossible to say that the virtual intellectual potential of 100 sons of doctors is higher than that of 100 sons of operatives. It might perhaps be thought that doctors constitute an intellectual selection and that their children must quite naturally be more intelligent than those who come from a non-selective environment. But, without being specialists in biology, we all know that the Mendelian laws tend to rule out such an assumption; the genes which make up the human embryo are derived completely at random from those of our remotest ancestors. Who then can say that the eighty sixteenth century ancestors of a doctor today were on average more intelligent than those of today's operative?

From the point of view of heredity, the children of a determined social group therefore do not seem to have any possible particular advantages or handicaps as compared with others. The problem does not lie there..... inequalities as between social groups are created after birth.

Economic inequalities inherent in the social environment, inequalities in the scope of family ambitions, of course, but also inequalities in the awakening and development of the aptitudes of children.

Even before primary school, the family circle differs in the extent to which it stimulates the awakening of aptitudes and the acquisition of knowledge. Similarly, during schooling, the action of the teachers is not equally seconded by the specific action of the family. For example the children of intellectuals acquire at the grammar school a culture which is already familiar to them and in which they been quite unconsciously steeped in their own family; the children of manual workers cannot profit from the same favourable circumstances. That is the most serious obstacle to a genuine equality of opportunity; Le Pelletier de Saint Fargeau, member of the Convention and of its Committee on Public Education, clearly understood this when he recommended, in the report which Robespierre read from the rostrum after his death, that all children should be brought up in boarding schools away from family influence.

A number of research workers have brought out this family influence on school results. I again take some figures on this subject from Alain Girard (Table no. 4). It will be seen that in all 55 to 56 per cent of the children of senior and middle executives have very good or good school results, compared with 31 per cent of farmers' children and 28 per cent of operatives' children. The reverse rates are found for poor or bad results.

Table 4. School results by social origin (average second year)(1)

	Very good %	Good %	Average %	Poor %	Bad %	Total %
Industrial operatives	5	23	34	25	13	100
Farmers	8	28	33	21	10	100
Middle executives	17	39	27	12	5	100
Senior executives	19	36	29	13	3	100

Identical results are found in all countries, including the peoples' democracies.

It is true that the differences in school success indicated above are not as wide as those relating to opportunity of access to higher education referred to above, but they largely explain them and, above all, unlike the others, they constitute an obstacle of fact, against which the real weapon, apart from the radical solution advocated by Le Pelletier, is effective only in the long term, namely the rise in the cultural level of all families.

(1) Source: Revue Population (I.N.E.D.) No. 3 of 1963.

B. What are the possible remedies?

The foregoing reflections show that there is no panacea and that in all countries it is and will be a very long job to give concrete shape to the democratic ideal in this field. It can be done only by determination and by setting about it and achieving it progressively; that is above all a question of political choice.

(a) The reform of educational structures is certainly one of the first tasks to be undertaken.

Any remains of the 'dual' school systems of the nineteenth century must be swept away, in which a 'primary-secondary' education essentially reserved for the children of the bourgeoisie co-existed alongside, but separate from, a primary school, culminating in terminal classes, for the use of manual workers.

The USSR set off along these lines by organizing, immediately after the Revolution, a system of completely unified general education based on the principle of the 'continuous ladder'(1). It is true that the United States of America had been exploring this avenue for a long time and had established a school system which naturally led on from primary to secondary for all children; the current French reform and reforms in other Common Market countries are directed along these lines.

Structural reforms, that is to say, mainly the generalisation of access to general secondary school, have great merits from the point of view which concerns us; the choice between differentiated forms of education is postponed until 15 or 16; the prolonged action (8 or 9 years) of the common school helps to diminish appreciably the differentiated effects of the influence of the family circle; in this sense the postponement of the age of choice between differentiated education is certainly a factor in equalizing opportunity from the social point of view.

But structural reforms very soon reach their limits.

By way of example, let us look at the present situation in the USSR. According to information which is still unofficial more than 60 per cent of young Soviet citizens between 17 and 18 will complete full secondary schooling this year. Only 20 per cent of the age-group, however, will go on to higher education owing to the existence of a 'numerus clausus'.

In practice, the Soviet regime has aroused ambitions in all social circles and most secondary school leaving certificate-holders are therefore candidates for entrance into higher education.

How will this difficult selection operate from the social point of view?

(1) Each level of the school system leads to a higher level.

It is certain that the children of the 5 million graduate senior executives and the 7 million middle executives trained by the Soviet regime will, in the nature of things - the reactions of Soviet families being identical with those of French families - be on average better prepared to take the entrance examination than the children of Kolkhoz families or industrial operatives. There is therefore now a great danger that the children of middle and senior executives will monopolise places in higher education establishments. To guard against this, the University of Moscow, for example, reserves 40 per cent of entry places for the children of manual workers. This fact clearly illustrates the difficulty of the problem; when inequality is eliminated up to a certain level of education it reappears at the higher level. Structural reforms are not a panacea, but they nevertheless have great value; they unquestionably narrow the gaps.

(b) Educational action. Energetic educational action is the essential complement to structural reforms. In fact, even from primary level, where education is common to all, social inequalities already appear in many different aspects:

- differences in school success on completion of the elementary cycle (Table 2),

- higher repeating rates among the children of manual workers, etc.

From the educational point of view, there are many ways of encouraging equality of opportunity and I do not profess to list them, or even to know them all:

- the development of nursery schools, which will allow an awakening of the child's faculties and a development of his powers of expression which could not be obtained in certain families,

- the abolition of overcrowded classes with a view to obtaining by the real individualisation of teaching, greater help from the teacher for children in difficulty, that is to say, usually those who do not benefit from family help,

- the renovation of teaching methods in the direction of better adaptation to the special characteristics of the new and more popular clientèle now gaining access to secondary education, etc.

CONCLUSION

(1) The distant prospects of equalisation of opportunity

The question may be asked where we shall be in the twenty-first century on the completion of such an effort. At that stage, will the progress of education and culture in all circles result in the attitude of the whole population then being very close to the present exceptional attitude of the

higher executives of today? In that event, are we moving towards a society in which perhaps 70 to 80 per cent of young people will reach secondary school leaving certificate stage and 50 per cent a first degree in higher education?

Such a vision is perhaps Utopian, but it is the direction in which we seem to be led both by the extrapolation of recent trends(1) and by comparison with the United States model(2); in California more than 75 per cent of young people complete full secondary school (12 years study), 54 per cent go to Junior Colleges and 30 per cent already complete 4 years higher education. Personally, I think it is exactly along these lines that education will develop in the societies of the future. Some people are worried about the capacity of the economy to absorb such a proportion of graduates; this worry would no doubt be justified if the 'needs' for graduates of the future economy were assessed by stabilizing the qualification which correspond today to a given category of jobs. But this is not the direction of the evolution, since the development of education quite naturally leads to a steady rise in the qualifications attached to the same job.

From this point of view, is it so very unthinkable that in the twenty-first century a large proportion of French farmers will have access to certain forms of education now described as higher?

In this distant prospect, which presupposes a profound transformation of economic and social structures, we may perhaps therefore succeed in giving concrete shape to this concept of equality of opportunity. Perhaps also by virtue of the phenomenon I referred to in connection with the limitation of the effects of structural reforms, social differentiations will reassert themselves again at the stage of access to the most advanced studies (post-graduate courses)(3).

(2) The progress of 'democratisation' and planning the education system

At the present juncture, in any event, the opportunity of access by young people of different social backgrounds to further secondary and higher education, remains highly differentiated and this fact lies at the deepest root of social inequalities. It is a difficult and long-term task to arrive at a better equalization of opportunity since, as I say again, as the example of the socialist countries shows, there is no royal remedy. But the example of these same countries, as well as of the United States, also shows that substantial progress is a possibility. A country's effort in this field must be judged by the pace of its progress.

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(1) The current development of education among the children of the masses will have an accelerating effect - in geometric progression - among following generations.

(2) The prospects of educational development in USSR for 1980 are moreover along the same lines.

(3) The answer is not self-evident, since at this level aptitudes will in all probability have greater influence than the family.

In all industrialised countries the question of equalizing opportunity in connection with further education is the key to the evolution towards greater social mobility or, on the contrary, the maintenance of a relatively rigid social stratification.

This question interests the educational planner from three aspects:

- first, the acceleration of the progress of democratisation should be one of the objectives of the school and university plan which should include all measures calculated to contribute to it;

- secondly, the limitation, even during the course of the planning period (4 or 5 years) of the progress of democratisation (owing to the strength of the family factors referred to above) may in some cases be a brake on the short-term expansion of higher education envisaged in the plan;

- finally, sociological analysis brings out the multiplier effect of the development of education in one generation on the next generation, and makes it possible to forecast the long-term trend of the demand for education and, as a more or less direct consequence, the development of the education system itself.

This indicates the full importance which the educational planner should attach to the results of sociological analysis of further education.

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